

re-introduced to their native land as and when they can be assured of a reasonable chance of survival there.

The preservation of habitat, control of introduced competitors and predators, protection from Man himself, as well as fostering a sense of interest and responsibility among the peoples of the world, are some of the problems facing all who strive to preserve what is left of the world's fauna.

The European and African races of Baillon's Crake, *Porzana pusilla*

by C. W. BENSON

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Porzana pusilla obscura Neumann of eastern and southern Africa and Madagascar is generally considered distinct from *P. p. intermedia* (Hermann) of central and southern Europe. According to Mackworth-Praed and Grant (1952, 1962) *obscura* differs from *intermedia* in being generally darker, especially darker grey below, and in having a shorter bill. They give the wing of *obscura* as 75–93, as against 89–102 mm. in *intermedia*. *Intermedia* is said to migrate south to Angola and Somaliland.

In 1962, thanks to a grant from the Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund made at the instance of Dr. D. Amadon, I was able to study the material of the two forms in the American Museum of Natural History. I subsequently studied that in the following further museums, and am especially grateful for assistance to the following individuals whose names are appended: Chicago Natural History Museum (Major M. A. Traylor); United States National Museum (Drs. A. Wetmore and P. S. Humphrey); British Museum (J. D. Macdonald and I. C. T. Galbraith); South Africa Museum (Dr. J. M. Winterbottom); Transvaal Museum (O. P. M. Prozesky); National Museum, Bulawayo (M. P. Stuart Irwin). P. A. Clancey also kindly lent three specimens from the Durban Museum.

In colour I can find no constant difference between European and more southern specimens. Regardless of sex, adults vary considerably in the intensity of grey on the under side, and many European specimens are no less dark below than those from further south. On the upper side there is no marked variation, either geographical or individual, and immature specimens, largely white below, are similar to adults.

Major Traylor, who compared with me in Chicago eight European specimens with eight African, agreed that they were inseparable on colour. So, too, did C. M. N. White, who examined with me over 60 specimens in the British Museum. I had already come to a similar conclusion after comparing seven European with 22 African and Madagascan specimens in the American Museum of Natural History. Witherby *et al* (1944) give sexual differences in *intermedia*, in particular the female having more white on the throat. But some apparently adult specimens of both *intermedia* and *obscura* sexed as females virtually lack any white, and others sexed as males have it well developed.

Measurements (in mm.) of wing and culmen (from base) are as follows:

	Number of specimens	Wing	Culmen	100 x culmen wing
Europe	45	84-95 (90.0)	17-20.5 (18.7)	20.8
Africa (1)	25	80-90 (84.4)	17-21 (18.4)	
„ (2)	57	76-93 (84.2)	17-20.5 (18.4)	
Africa, total	82	76-93 (84.2)	17-21 (18.4)	21.9
Madagascar (1)	7	80-87 (83.4)	18-20 (18.5)	
„ (2)	19	82-94 (85.3)	18.5-21 (19.9)	
Madagascar, total	26	80-94 (84.8)	18-21 (19.5)	23.0

Included with the European series are one from Algeria and one from lower Egypt (whence Meinertzhagen, 1930 records *intermedia* breeding). Excluded is an outstandingly large specimen in the British Museum from Malta, wing 100, culmen 21 mm. (1) signifies specimens collected between 1st May and 30th September, theoretically unlikely to be palaeartic migrants. (2) signifies specimens collected between 1st October and 30th April, or undated, and could *a priori* be palaeartic migrants. All African specimens are from south of 10° N.

The figures for the second African and Madagascan series, supposedly containing some palaeartic migrants, show no striking difference from those in the first two such series. On average the African and Madagascan specimens have shorter wings, but there is considerable overlap, and in my opinion *obscura* is not worth recognising as distinct from *intermedia*. Although Mackworth-Praed and Grant state that the bill is shorter in *obscura* than in *intermedia*, my figures do not support this, and in comparison with the wing-length it is proportionately longer, especially in the Madagascan series.

The specimen with the longest wing (90 mm.) in the first African series, in the American Museum of Natural History, was collected by Archer at Tug Wajaleh, ex-British Somaliland, 18th September, 1920 (see also Archer and Godman, 1937). It is the only Somali record of which I am aware, and it must be on the basis of this specimen that Mackworth-Praed and Grant record *intermedia*. But I am not convinced that it is a palaeartic migrant. The date seems early, and I have seen two European specimens from Ahlsdorf collected on 17th September and another from there on 24th September, while a specimen from Dover is dated as late as 9th October (I have incidentally seen two Italian specimens collected as early as March, and ten Spanish specimens collected in this month, the earliest being from Valencia on the 7th). Mackworth-Praed and Grant also record *intermedia* from Angola, but of eight specimens, all in the British Museum, collected by Ansoerge at Catumbella, none has wing more than 87 mm., and all are dated *August*. Understandably, Traylor (1963) only lists *obscura*. In the second African series there are only two specimens with wings over 89 mm. One, wing 93 mm., was collected on 23rd Decem-

ber, thus well within the period when palaeartic migrants might be present, but as far south as Excelsior, Orange Free State. The other, wing 92 mm., was obtained even further south at Paarl, western Cape Province. Furthermore it laid an egg in early *September*, a few days after being captured. There are two Madagascan specimens with wing over 89 mm., one 91, and one 94 mm. Neither bears any date or precise locality. The latter is probably an exceptionally large, locally bred individual, analogous to the Maltese specimen with wing 100 mm. To summarise, I find no convincing evidence from the material which I have examined of the occurrence of palaeartic birds in tropical Africa or further south. On the other hand Morel and Roux (1962) record specimens of *intermedia* from Senegal (19th November, 1st January). These specimens may very well be palaeartic migrants, especially as Bannerman (1931, 1951) does not mention *obscura* (or *intermedia*).

Benson (in press) produces evidence that two other crakes, *Crex egregia* and *Porzana marginalis* are migratory in southern Africa, only normally present from about December to April. Dated specimens of *P. pusilla* from Africa south of 8° S. fall into months as follows: January, 9; February, 2; March, 1; April, 1; May, nil; June, 3; July, 3; August, 12; September, 5; October, 10; November, 11; December, 6. In addition, Rudebeck (1955) records a specimen for November from South West Africa. These figures indicate no particular peak, and in this region *P. pusilla* may be largely resident, with no more than local movements, in accordance with seasonal fluctuations of water-level. Extracting the figures for the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, where the presence of *Crex egregia* and *P. marginalis* coincides almost entirely with the rains, and there is a very well marked dry season from May to October, the result is: February, 1; March, 1; June, 2; July, 3; October, 2; November, 1; December, 2. Again, of the overall figure of ten specimens for August, eight are from Catumbella, in arid south-western Angola, in the middle of the dry season. Sneyd Taylor, in a series of papers dealing with waterfowl and waders at Fort Beaufort, Cape Province (*Ostrich*, 1946-55), gives dates of occurrence for every month except April and May, while Courtenay-Latimer (1962) regards it as a rare resident. A further point is that while Benson gives records of *C. egregia* and *P. marginalis* taken at sea or at buildings at night, and presumably on migration, no such African records have been traced for *P. pusilla*.

P. pusilla has been recorded as breeding in Abyssinia (Guichard, 1948). The female containing a fully developed egg to which he refers is in the British Museum, and has wing 83 mm. only. It is the only Abyssinian specimen examined. South of Abyssinia, except that I collected a male with enlarged testes at Loudon, Mzimba District, Nyasaland, 20th March, 1938, there is apparently still no definite breeding record north of the Zambezi. The record quoted by White and Winterbottom (1949) of breeding in Barotseland in February and March has still to be corroborated.

With reference to the records from Senegal by Morel and Roux (1962), Dr. Morel kindly informs me that the male (19th November) has wing 89 mm., and the female (1st January) wing 91 mm. These measurements are well within the range for European specimens, and considerably larger than the average of African.

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The species of *Cercococcyx* in Mwinilunga, Northern Rhodesia

by C. W. BENSON

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Benson (1958) records four specimens of *Cercococcyx mechowi* Cabanis from the Lisombo Stream, northern Mwinilunga District. At the time of collecting he thought that they must be *C. olivinus* Sassi, which has been collected as close as Katapena, in the Katanga (Chapin, 1939). But having no other material of either species available he donated one specimen to the British Museum, and was informed that it was *mechowi*.

The remarkably long wing-lengths (148-157 mm.) of these specimens, and of another (155 mm.) collected at Salujinga (10° 58' S., 24° 07' E.) on 25th August, 1962, recently caused me to investigate the matter further. Thanks to Mrs. B. P. Hall and Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin I have had the loan of eight specimens of *mechowi* and seven of *olivinus* from the British Museum, and of four Mwinilunga specimens together with one of *C. montanus* Chapin from the National Museum, Bulawayo.

There is no doubt that all five Mwinilunga specimens are not *mechowi*, but *olivinus*. Chapin (1928: 2) mentions colour-differences between the two species on the under side which seem better marked and more constant than those which he gives for the upper side. In the key at the end of his paper, and again (1939), he only gives the latter. The blackish bars on the under side are fewer and narrower in *olivinus*, and the under tail-coverts lack the markedly buffy wash present in *mechowi*.

The difference in the proportions of the wing and tail, given by Chapin (1928, 1939) is borne out quite well by my own measurements. To these I am able to add those of the material in the American Museum of Natural History, taken while working there in June, 1962, thanks to a grant from the Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund, very kindly arranged by Dr. D. Amadon.